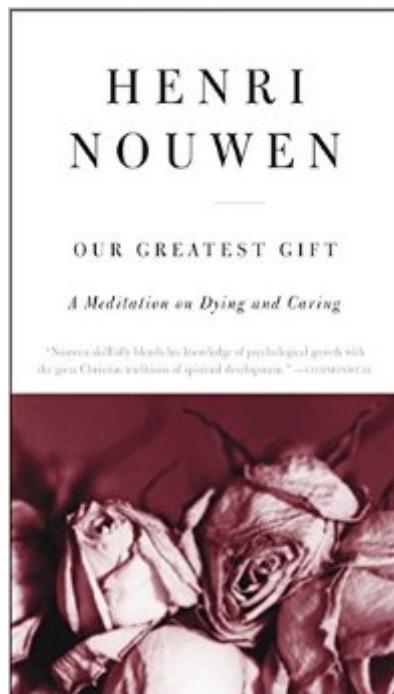


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Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation On Dying And Caring



Synopsis

One of the best-loved spiritual writers of our timeâ "an author ranked with C.S. Lewis and Thomas Mertonâ "Henry J.M. Nouwen, takes a moving, personal look at human mortality in Our Greatest Gift. A meditation on dying and caring, Our Greatest Gift gently and eloquently reveals the gifts that the living and dying can give to one another. The beloved bestselling author of With Open Hands, The Wounded Healer, and Making All Things New shares his own experiences with aging, loss, grief, and fear in this important and life-altering work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a great book for all those dealing with the ministry of the pastoral care for the sick or those confronting a illness or death in the family. It demonstrates that although sometimes we cannot take away the physical pain of being sick or dying, often times, the most important part is not adding to the emotional, psychological and more importantly, spiritual pain that those who are suffering often feel. It is a call to compassion through Jesus, who is the best example of compassion that we have.

Our society says that only "productive" people are worthwhile. Nouwen challenges us all to see the innate worth of ALL people, not just those making a salary and contributing to the tax base. We did a study of this book at Church and it made folks really think about life, death, aging, and the value of their loved ones who are in nursing homes, etc.

This book is a must read for everyone - not just for those caring for the dying or those who are

confronting the issues of aging. Culturally, we are in denial about aging and death. This book takes great strides toward moving those who read it to confront the issues. It is not always a comfortable book to read, particularly if you are in the middle of working with someone for whom death is imminent, but it is absolutely essential to read it despite the discomfort. Highly recommended for everyone who works with people who age - which is all of us!

Henri Nouwen's work is helpful in developing a global view of our death and our lives, emphasizing the solidarity of the human race. All of us are born, and regardless of one's circumstances (rich/poor, race, geographic location) we will all die. Nouwen brings the focus of this solidarity of the human experience and the mission of Jesus Christ to tell us that the God of the universe held us before we were born and will take us back to himself. There are enough statements of faith that seem to lean away from orthodox (small "o") Christian and Roman Catholic doctrine, as he proposes in our deaths we can send the Holy Spirit to those we love. He attempts to clarify the universality of all men and women as sons and daughters of God. As an evangelical, I need to give his constructs some room just to hear him out. If you cannot allow for some ambiguity in reading his work and recognize the wisdom gained in his life experience, say, as identifying your self as a fundamentalist or strict Evangelical, you will likely disagree with much of his theology. But if you need to regain a focus of the love of God for mankind and for his people to live with others in that same love, this is a good resource to explore the subject of death and its role in our lives.

Henri Nouwen provides a well thought out view on dying. His concern is that we should treat dying as a normal part of living and we should examine our relationship with God. Death is a beautiful entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven and should be considered the next step in our life with God. This is an excellent book for those in ministry who work with families who are in grief due to the death of a loved one. The material provides background that may be utilized during funerals and consoling family members.

Our Greatest Gift: a Meditation on Dying and Caring (Henri Nouwen) What to awaken to when approaching death: We are all children of God. "Life is lived from dependence to dependence." (p.14) We are brothers and sisters of each other. "However different we are, we were all born powerless, and we will all die powerless, and the little differences we live in between dwindle in the light of this enormous truth." (p.26) We are parents of generations to come. "The real question before our death, then, is not, How much can I still accomplish, or How much influence can I still

exert? but, How can I live so that I can continue to be fruitful when I am no longer here among my family and friends? That question shifts our attention from doing to being. ... The great paradox of our lives is that we are often concerned about what we do or still can do, but we are most likely to be remembered for who we were." (p.41)"Are we still in touch with those who have died [as in visiting their cemetery, etc.], or are we living our lives as if those who lived before us never really existed?" (p.71)"To care for the dying is to help make that hard move from action to passion, from success to fruitfulness, from wondering how much they can still accomplish to making their very lives a gift for others. Caring for the dying means helping the dying discover that, in their increasing weakness, God's strength becomes visible." (p.94)"Through the resurrection, God has said to Jesus, 'You are indeed my beloved Son, and my love is everlasting,' and to us God has said, 'You indeed are my beloved children, and my love is everlasting.' The resurrection is God's way of revealing to us that nothing that belongs to God will ever go to waste. What belongs to God never get lost - not even our mortal bodies." (p.109)

Nouwen tackles the subject of death and how to better prepare for it. Sometimes I think he goes off on a tangent, but, on the whole, I think his wrestling helps our wrestling. Great read for examining your life to see what kind of legacy you'll leave behind.

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